

May 28, 1935 – Beloit Merchant Police Officer Fred Samp



During the course of researching Beloit Police Department history, retired Beloit Police Chief Roger Helser discovered many newspaper accounts of the slaying of Beloit Merchant Police Officer Frederick Samp. Research began to attempt to verify the stories. Officer Samp's family was located and they were able to provide a verbal history along with his badge pictured above. St. Joseph MO provided us with an original wanted poster from their records for one of the suspects.

In 2011 Beloit Police Chief Norm Jacobs initiated the submittal process to have Officer Samp included on the National and State Law Enforcement Memorials. On February 16, 2012, we received a phone call from Officer Samp's family indicating that the National Law Enforcement Memorial in Washington DC has approved the placement of Officer Samp on the Memorial.

National Law Enforcement Week this year will be May 13 – 19th, 2012. According to their website, new names of fallen officers are added to the Memorial in April. The Candlelight Vigil, when all the names of fallen officers for the year are read including Officer Samp, will be May 13th.

On May 28, 1935 Merchant Police Officer Fred Samp, 42, was shot and killed attempting to apprehend two men wanted in connection to an attempted Armed Auto Theft.

Fred Samp was appointed a Police Officer for the City of Beloit on August 1, 1925. Officer Samp subsequently resigned on April 12, 1927 to join what was called the Merchants Police in Beloit. This practice was somewhat common as the Merchants Police paid better than the City of Beloit did. Beyond that little is actually known about the Merchants Police. It is known that the Merchants Police were hired to protect businesses from Burglary and Fire. It is believed that they wore some sort of uniform, were armed, and did make arrests. These arrest statistics were included in annual Beloit Police Reports made to the City Council.

The shooting occurred at 12:25am, May 28, 1935, in the 300 block of Broad Street at the rear of what was the North Western railway freight station. Officer Samp was shot four times with a .32 caliber revolver, twice in the abdomen, once in the chest, and once in the left arm, one bullet piercing the center of his officer's badge. The suspects were identified as William Mosley, 29, and Herbert Davis, 30, with Mosley being identified as

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the suspect that had fired the shots. The suspects were described as transients traveling from Seattle, Washington toward Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

Officer Samp was shot about 45 minutes after Mosley and Davis had attempted to steal a car near the Blackhawk Gardens Tavern in South Beloit, and threatened Mrs. Eunice Cluskey, owner of the vehicle, and Mrs. Amy Phelps, with a revolver.

Cluskey and Phelps reported the incident to the South Beloit Police Department and then began driving home. On the way, both women recognized the two suspects near Graddy's Restaurant at 221 State Street. The ladies also saw Officer Samp close by. The ladies reported the matter to Officer Samp and warned him that the suspects were armed. Officer Samp told the ladies he was "not afraid" and set out alone after the suspects. Officer Samp apparently caught up with the suspects behind the freight station as witnesses reported hearing shots ring out. Officer Samp was found face down without having drawn his weapon.

Officer Samp was rushed by Police Ambulance to the Beloit Municipal Hospital. Officer Samp was reported as saying, "I'll get them yet. I'll get over it and I'll get them. Everything will be all right". Officer Samp died eight hours later at 8:25am. Officer Samp was survived by his wife and four children at 1248 Division.

Beloit Police Chief Torrisi ordered out 40 reserve officers, pressed all police motor equipment into service, obtained additional cars, to search all areas of the city. On May 29, 1935 Herbert Davis was arrested outside Harvard Illinois. Davis was charged with Attempted 1st Degree murder. A memorial fund was quickly established as was a reward for the arrest of Mosley. William Mosley was eventually arrested and charged with the same crime.